

Appeasement of Hitler

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **appeasement of Adolf Hitler** by the British and French governments in the late 1930s is the best-known case of appeasement, and one of the major causes of the negative connotations now attached to the word.

The Munich Agreement in particular stands as a major example of appeasement. There is, however, a large historiographical debate about appeasement.

Contents

- 1 Reasons the British Government pursued appeasement
 - 1.1 Settling Germany against Soviet Union
 - 1.2 Redressing the Treaty of Versailles
- 2 Peace for our time and Chamberlain's assault on Hitler
- 3 Origins of the concept of the Western Betrayal
- 4 References

Reasons the British Government pursued appeasement

Setting Germany against Soviet Union

Conservative politicians not only worried about the threat posed by Hitler's Germany, but also about the threat posed by the Soviet Union.

Many British conservatives felt that bolshevik ideology was a greater danger to Europe and wanted to build up the strength of Germany as a bulwark to counter the Soviet Union.

The Chamberlain government in 1937 eventually decided to pursue a more active policy of appeasement to push Germany eastwards, with the aim of encouraging and allowing Germany to expand towards the east until Germany and the Soviet Union shared a common frontier.

The British government had calculated that this situation of Germany sharing a closer border with the Soviet Union would increase the probability of Hitler launching an attack against the Soviet Union.

This line of thinking proved accurate when Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.

By setting the Germans against the Bolsheviks, the British government hoped to kill two birds with one stone, expecting that the two enemies would exhaust each another in a German-Soviet war. [1][2][3][4][5][6][7]

Redressing the Treaty of Versailles

The Treaty of Versailles imposed many restrictions on internal German affairs, which the Allied nations later on came to view as unfair to Germany.

Many people argued that German rearmament, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the acquisition of the Saarland were merely examples of the Germans taking back what was rightfully theirs.

The Conservative Party gradually began to take this view, in line with popular opinion and Conservative thinking of the time. Many people also believed that since Versailles had created the states of Poland and Czechoslovakia on the basis of self-determination, it was unjust to deny the opportunity of Austrians and Sudetenlanders to join Germany if they so wished.

Because Hitler had not taken any obviously non-German territory as of 1938, a war launched by the Allies at this stage would have been a war launched merely on the basis of suspicion, in which Britain would be deeply divided. This might have proven catastrophic if the war had gone badly for the Allies — as indeed happened in 1940.

By 1939 Hitler had annexed the very non-German city of Prague — meaning that self-determination could no longer be used to justify his actions. This made a decision to go to war in 1939 far easier than in 1938.

Peace for our time and Chamberlain's assault on Hitler

Chamberlain's *Munich Agreement* deal (*peace for our time*) (i.e., the surrender of the Sudetenland to Germany) with Hitler was internationally acclaimed and praised at home and abroad, by among others Pope Pius XI, Ireland's Eamon de Valera, the United States administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Canada's William Lyon Mackenzie King.

Chamberlain was acclaimed by many British people for avoiding another war. He was greeted by cheering crowds on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, alongside King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who themselves supported his policy, both having lost friends and relatives in the last war.

A voice condemning the Agreement came in the publication that very same day of the best-selling Penguin Special *Europe and the Czechs* by S. Grant Duff, a copy of which was delivered to each member of Parliament. As the publishers state, the volume was written at their request and was completed as late as the first week of September, and sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies.

The Munich Agreement marked the high tide of appeasement. The Labour Party attacked the appeasers as the "Men of Munich" and moved firmly into the pro-war camp, in line with their belief in Collective Security.

Origins of the concept of the Western Betrayal

The Czechoslovak leaders and the population believed that if Germany attacked, France would meet its treaty obligation to Czechoslovakia and attack Germany. They also believed that Britain — which unlike France had no treaty obligation to Czechoslovakia — would be drawn in, too. The Soviet Union also had a treaty obligation to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia — if France did. There was no question of America acting, as far as Jan Masaryk, the son of the first Czechoslovak President, professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, was concerned.

It is when viewed against this background that the rationale and impact of Chamberlain's agreement with Hitler takes on less than desirable and laudable characteristics:

On September 27, 1938, when negotiations between Hitler and Chamberlain were strained, the British Prime Minister addressed the British people [8]. At the heart of why his critics view his policy as well-meaning but ultimately wrong [9] is this sentence from that speech: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing."

Just 20 years before Chamberlain addressed the British people regarding his agreement with Hitler, WWI ended in The Treaty of Versailles [10]. Czechoslovakia was one of the original members of the League of Nations signatories of the Versailles treaty of peace. Part I, Articles 27–30, addresses the Boundaries of Germany. Part III, Political Clauses for Europe, Section VII, of that treaty addresses the Czecho-Slovak State. Yet, Chamberlain characterised the Czechs and the Germans as "people of whom we know nothing".

The peoples whose fate was being decided in Munich were not invited to the negotiating table. *O nás bez nás* (about us without us) became a phrase bitterly remembered by all Czechs and Slovaks. Neither were the peoples whose fates were being decided invited to the Yalta Conference in 1945.

References

1. A Tragedy and Hope
2. <http://anonymoususer/cgi-bin/anonymous.cgi/http://www.alexanderhamiltoninstitute.org/lp/Hancock/CD-ROMS/GlobalFederation%5CWorld%20Trade%20Federation%20-%201908%20-%2020Tragedy%20and%20Hope.html#Part%20Twelve%E2%80%9494The%20>
3. http://yamaguchi.net/firms/click&angle_12b.html
4. The Anglo-American Establishment
5. <http://anonymoususer/cgi-bin/anonymous.cgi/http://www.alexanderhamiltoninstitute.org/lp/Hancock/CD-ROMS/GlobalFederation%5CWorld%20Trade%20Federation%20-%201936%20-%20The%20Anglo-American%20Establishment.html#Chapter%2012%E2%80%9494The%20>
6. http://www.agtrop.org.au/elt/history/1948_falsifiers_of_history.php
7. <http://www.plp.org/books/Stalin/node131.html>
8. <http://www.zmag.org/CMag/articles/barbarene.htm>
9. <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/munich.html>
10. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Kosovo/Story/0,2763,209643,00.html>
11. <http://history.acad.edu/em/text/storyoftheestrateg/vers/content.htm>

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appeasement_of_Hitler"

Categories: Cleanup from February 2007 | All pages needing cleanup | World War II politics

- This page was last modified 15:15, 25 January 2008.
 - All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
- Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.